

The World of Letters as Others See It

The Original 'Col. Sellers.'

"COL. SELLERS" was a Lampton, and a tolerably near relative of my mother's; and when he was alive, poor old airy soul, one of the earliest things a stranger was likely to hear from his lips was some reference to the "head of our line," flung off with a painful casualness that was wholly beneath criticism as a work of art. It compelled inquiry, of course; it was intended to compel it. Then followed the whole disastrous history of how the Lampton heir came to this country a hundred and fifty years or so ago, disgusted with that foolish fraud, hereditary aristocracy, and married, and shut himself away from the world in the remoteness of the wilderness, and went to breeding ancestors of future American Claimants, while at home in England he was given up as dead and his titles and estates turned over to his younger brother, usurper and personally responsible for the perverse and unseatable usurpers of our day. And the Colonel always spoke with studied and courtly deference of the Claimant of his day—a second cousin of his—and referred to him with entire seriousness as "the Earl."—From the "Autobiography of Mark Twain" in "Harper's."

A Grandfather's Library.

THE walls there were filled with bookcases and the bookcases were filled with the most valueless books procurable. His Thackeray was made hideous by the reproductions of Thackeray's hideous drawings; his Bulwer Lytton was printed in double columns, and his Scott was a small Edinburgh edition of small type and depressing steel engravings. I forget what the Dickens was like—even then I found Dickens stupid. One comprehensive set of English poetry, Pickering's, was as good as possible; but what remained, William Cullen Bryant, Emerson, Lowell, couldn't well be duller. I tried Cooper, without success—I rather preferred Pepper and Salt, a collection of proverbs—followed Peter Ibbetson in *Harper's Magazine*, and found a story by Whyman, Francis Cludde, in a dusty and unpromising

file. The rest were, mainly, subscription editions, but not Paul de Kock—though I found a copy of Cousine Bette buried deep in a closet—no, they were portfolios of engraved masterpieces of art; eminent men, among which my grandfather—securing the sale of at least two sets—was invariably present; and elaborate affairs, bound always in tooled dark leather, biographical or having to do with the Protestant Church.—From "Tintypes." By Joseph Hergschelmer in the "Reviewer."

Scene of 'The Merry Men.'

PERHAPS not so many as have read "Kidnapped" are acquainted with "The Merry Men," though it is a singularly artistic short story, even more intimately and completely associated with this island. It was Stevenson's first literary use of his memories of Earraid, and his remark to Graham Balfour, "I began with the feeling of one of those islands on the west coast of Scotland, and I gradually developed the story to express the sentiment with which that coast affected me," shows how he not so

much set the story in this particular place as built up the action to suit the island atmosphere he loved. All who have read that "fantastic sonata about the sea and wrecks" know that the action and, indeed, the characters owe their nature to the situation and topography of the island.—From "Eilean Earraid: the Beloved Isle of Robert Louis Stevenson." By Llewellyn M. Buell in "Scribner's."

Hearn in New Orleans.

POSSIBLY there was no more uneventful period in Hearn's life than the few comfortable years he spent in New Orleans, working for subsistence on the daily papers and boarding with Mrs. Courtney, who lived above a grocery on the corner of Gasquet and Robertson streets. Although it was there, in the two rooms that he occupied, that he wrote his first books, "Stray Leaves from Strange Literature" (dedicated to Page M. Baker), "Gombo Zhebes," "Some Chinese Ghosts," "Chita" (dedicated to Dr. Rodolfo Matas) and his wonderful series of translations from the French. Hearn and this landlady

became great friends ("both being Irish," as she boasted); and it proved to be one friendship, at least, to which he was faithful. He wrote to her from the West Indies and from Japan; wrote her when he married and when his children were born. And during the years he boarded with her, whenever he left the city in search of literary material, he always wrote to her as he might have done to a mother.—From "Lafcadio Hearn and Denny Corcoran." By Lucille Rutland in the "Double Dealer."

Genius and Affliction.

HISTORY teems with examples of artists crippled with sensory insufficiencies. Homer and Milton were blind. Beethoven was deaf. These exceptions do not disprove the rule. It is rational to assume that Homer, like Milton, was afflicted late in life. Beethoven's hearing deserted him completely at 54; by that time he had composed the Ninth Symphony and the Missa Solemnis, his noblest works.—From "What Makes a Genius." By Alexander Lindey in the "Art Review."

The Book Factory

By EDWARD ANTHONY.

PUBLICITY.

(Several Laps After Gilbert.)

The story I propose to tell
Concerns the life of Jasper Bell,
Whereby who runs and reads may see
The Power of Publicitee.

Publicity made Jasper great;
Publicity was Jasper's Fate.
It raised him high to fame and bliss
And then—but read the rest of this.

By hook or by, it may be, crook,
Our Jasper wrote a brilliant book.
"My book," said he, "will make a stir!"
And sent it to a publisher.

The publisher did not delay
But sent the MS back straightway,
And Jasper, sanguine of men,
As straightway sent it out again.

Well, not to waste too many rimes,
This happened some two dozen times,
And at the twenty-fourth rejection,
"This," Jasper said, "requires inspection!"

"Demonstrably, it seems to me,
My book has verve, *elan*, *esprit*.
And yet—there is no room to err—
It simply has not made a stir!"

"Press agents are a canny lot,
They know who's who and what is what;
To agent Protheroe I'll whiz,
He'll tell me what the trouble is."

He whizzed to agent Protheroe
And told him briefly of his woe.
The agent said, "It's clear to me
That what you need's Publicitee."

"No doubt your book may fire the blood—
Without my help it's just a dud;
It may be, *au contraire*, a mess,
But I can make it a success."

"To sell your book were vain to try
Unless you're in the public eye."
"I'll leave it," Jasper said, "to you;
Just tell me what I have to do."

I've not been told the agent's plan,
And since I am a truthful man
His scheme remains forever hid;
However, here's what Jasper did:

Each day he donned an overcoat
And bathed in tepid creosote.
He started wearing Grecian skirts,
Pink gloves and double breasted shirts.

He pushed a penny with his nose
From Battery place to East Cohoes;
He dieted on peacocks' brains
And hunted flies in aeroplanes.

He did new stunts with patient vim—
Alas! the public yawned at him!
No matter what the thing he'd try,
The public closed the public eye.

And then at last the country woke,
For Jasper sprang a masterstroke!

He (true, it was the least bit raw)
Obeyed the Prohibition Law!

At once there sounded wild acclaim;
The nation rang with Jasper's name;

The papers gave him front page space;
News weeklies teemed with Jasper's face.

The publishers who'd turned him down
And on his book bestowed a frown,
With self-condemnatory squirms
Now begged for it on any terms.

He sold it (don't know how much for);
It made an absolute furor;
The play ran several hundred nights;
Quince Pictures bought the movie rights.

Thus Fortune to our Jasper came;
Thus he arrived at name and fame
As agent P. had said he would—
And Jasper saw that it was good.

He rose. Alas! would that were all,
But there's no rise without its fall,
And Jasper's was a frightful flop!—
He'd started—but he couldn't stop.

"Publicity" became to him
For "breath of life" the synonym;
We, reader, better balanced, float it—
He simply couldn't live without it.

He could not sleep, he could not eat,
He could not saunter down the street
In anything like peace of mind
Without six camera men behind.

Each day he'd read the papers thru
(It was his daily custom to)—
The *Star*, the *Bee*, the *Globe*, the *Call*—
From coast to coast he read them all.

He counted that day lost whose low
Descending Brooklyn *Sun* had no
(Excuse the gag) wild yarn to splutter,
With Jasper as its subject matter.

If printed on an inside page
He'd seethe with apoplectic rage
And with a terrifying roar
Berate the cringing editor.

Each day he found the longed for blurb
With naught his pleasure to disturb
Until he oped, one fatal morn,
The *Zambo County* (Okla.) *Horn*.

Poor Jasper's breath came thick and fast,
"What's this? What's this?" he choked at last,
"Here is a paper (can it be?)
Without a word concerning ME!"

"Here's *Quake Wrecks Town* on *Amazon*
And *Cops Raid Joint While Crooks Look On*;

Here's *Crocod Looks On While Bank Crooks Flee*.

But not a word concerning ME!

"At once I'll telegraph to warn
The editor of this here *Horn*
How greatly I'm annoyed that he
Has not a word concerning ME!"

He telegraphed to that effect.
At once an answer came collect.
Its tone was gruffly rude—"And
Who the (never mind)," it said, "are you?"

As when the surges smite the rock
Poor Jasper reeled beneath the shock.

His brain grew sick, his eyes grew dim—
This oaf had never heard of him!

From that day forth he peaked and pined;
He could not get it off his mind.

He would not read the papers more
And showed the cameramen the door.

He brooded—could not sleep at night,
He lost his healthy appetite.

He grew more pale and thin each day,
Until at last he passed away.

"Forgetting, by the world forgot,"
They laid him in his burial plot.
The papers ran but one short line—
"Twas 'Died.' J. Bell, aged 39."

The reason? 'Tis not far to seek.
They had another chap that week
Who into lasting fame had slid—
I can't recall just what he did.

The only thing I really know
Is—he was boomed by Protheroe,
And if I find his story's true,
Some day I'll tell about him too.

BARON IRELAND.

Not since Carolyn Wells filled half our column for us have we felt so happy as Baron Ireland's merry stanzas have made us. The Baron is one of the ablest employees of *The Book Factory* and we intend to give him a bonus. You gotta treat your help right, as Frank Tannenbaum points out in "The Labor Movement."

Baron Ireland, by the way, is old Nate Salisbury who has had so many pomes and ekits in *Life* in the past few years that he ought to be rich enough to retire soon. We hope so. Then he'll be able to write oftener for us. Salisbury, who isn't as well known as he ought to be, is one of the best light versifiers in the land. As long as we can remember F. P. A.'s column his *nom de plume* has decorated it. Last year the boss of the Conning Tower called Salisbury's "Christmas Rondel" one of the best rondels in the language.

OH, THOSE LEFTHANDERS!

When we were at Camp Merritt, one of the men in our outfit was "Rube" Bressler, the competent southpaw of the Cincinnati Reds. One day some one handed Rube a copy of Cooper's "The Spy" to read. Rube, after reading for a few minutes, was seen to rip some pages out of the book. Then he read on. In

a few minutes he tore out some more pages.

"What are you doing, Rube?" we asked him.

"Improving the book," he replied as he serenely ripped out another chapter.

"Whaddye mean—improving it?" we asked him.

"I'm tearing out the dull parts," said Rube. "It will be a better book when I get through; and the next guy will have an easier job reading it." With which the Rube proceeded to rip out another chapter.

QUATRAIN FROM MARTIAL

(Book 1—XXXII)
I love thee not, Sabidius. Why?
I know not. I can but reply—
(No other answer have I got)—
Sabidius, O I love thee not!

Perhaps Martial gave Tom Brown—bless his merry seventeenth century soul!—the idea for his well known:

I do not love thee, Doctor Fell,
The reason why I cannot tell;
But this alone I know full well,
I do not love thee, Doctor Fell!

Just as we were ready to give the Century Company the manuscript of our new book, "....." (what do you think of the title?), we discovered that one of our verse chapter headings, a triolet, had ten lines, or two too many. It took us half a day to make a smooth correction of the blunder. When we told this to Ferdinand K. Flick, the well-known head clerk of Buckel's Bookshop, and author of "Mother Nature," he laughed and said, "What a waste of time! You are too much concerned with form. One of my best sonnets contains seventeen lines."

Personal—Will the reader who sent us two contributions from Canada please send us his name and address?

FROM A REVIEWER'S NOTEBOOK

This is a first novel of sufficient merit to make one hope that it will not be the author's last. . . .

This novel tells the age-old story of a man's love for a woman. . . .

It is a pity that so able a writer could not resist the temptation to resort to melodrama in Chapter XVI. . . .

This grim account of life in darkest Harlem has unquestionable power. . . .

Here is an intelligent piece of story-telling for those who are tired of the sickly sentimentality of the second-raters. . . .

Do you wish to forget the drabness of everyday life? Then read this delightful romance of the South Sea Islands, this beautiful story of how a faded business man found love and contentment in picturesque Tahiti. . . .

In "Pegasuspirations" Lemuel Lazzaro, the well-known poet, has brought together many of his epics of modern life. The result is disappointing and proves once again that good magazine verse does not necessarily make a good book.

When these poems appeared individually one did not notice their

shrillness, their strident note. In book form this failing is all too apparent. The author is reminded that Calliope, the muse of epic poetry, is not a steam calliope. He shrieks too much; he is too hysterical.

Although, on the whole, the book is rotten, we expect fine things from this author. He has a rare gift for phrasing—as evidenced by such poignant passages as (*insert anything*)—and the spelling and punctuation are excellent throughout. . . .

OUR OWN QUESTION BOX.

Sir: Who is the author of the poem beginning—

Purple grapes,
Yellow bananas,
Red apples,
Blue plums,
Orange oranges,
All in the pink of condition,
On a push-cart.

MIGUEL OKLEINBERG,
(President, Bronx Bowling and Poetry Club.)

We are not sure; but it sounds like one of the early poems of Amy Lowell.—Ed. *Book Factory*.

Mr.: I am trying to locate a sonnet called "My Enslaved Soul." Can you help me? The first quatrain, which follows, may give you a clue: Where were my eyes when I married stupid Jake?

Life with the boor is one prolonged regret.

While I am lecturing at the club on Blake

He sits perusing the *Police Gazette*.

HEARTBROKEN.
"My Sensitive Soul" is by Carol Kennicott, author of "The Gopher Prairie Blues."—Ed. *Book Factory*.

AFTER READING SIMEON STRUNSKY'S DELIGHTFUL "IN-BAD AND HIS FRIENDS."

When weary of the simian books
With which my shelves are lined
It heartens me to put my hooks
Upon the *Simeon* kind.

We'd like to add that Simeon Strunsky has our vote for the Presidency of the Cap-and-Bolles-Letters Club that we recently started in this column. Strunsky, we think, combines fun and thought as successfully as any one writing in America today.

MERRY-GO-ROUNDELAYS

By EDWARD ANTHONY

HERALD readers

have had much

of Mr. Anthony in

"The Book Factory."

In this book they have

a feast of him. "Merry-

Go-Roundelays" is a

regular Roman banquet

of variegated del-

ights. Profusely illus-

trated with line draw-

ings. (At all book-

stores. \$1.50. Pub-

lished by The Century

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